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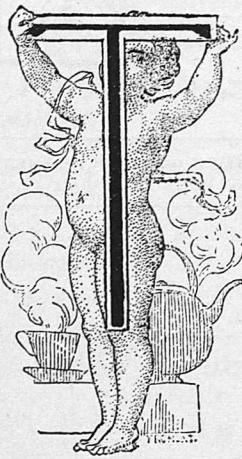
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THE ART AMATEUR.

My Note Book.

Leonato.—Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?
Don John.—Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.
Much Ado About Nothing.



HIS winter, in lieu of anything like the Mary J. Morgan, the A. T. Stewart or the Probasco sale, the eleven days' auction to close out the stock of Watson & Co. has been, so far, the art event of the sort of the season. Excepting the unfortunate Mr. L. L. Brown, who put his money into the business, the result should be satisfactory to all concerned. The public, and such dealers as Lanthier & Duveen, secured undoubted bargains. The person who has benefited most by the affair, however, is "Jim" Graham—as he is generally called—who directed the sale. This interesting gentleman, who figured in his newspaper advertisements as "James Graham, Esq." emerges like a meteor from the obscurity of his basement in Fourteenth Street to fame and, perhaps, to fortune. He has lost no time in negotiating for Mr. Watson's old place of business in Fifth Avenue, where the proceeds of his speculation should secure him a good start. Ever since Mr. Watson left the firm, the splendid stock had been gradually depleted at private sale—"no reasonable offer being refused." It is estimated that about \$140,000 worth of Watson & Co.'s goods went into the auction-room. For the privilege of disposing of them, Mr. Graham stipulated to hand over the sum of \$35,000 and one-third of whatever was received in excess of that amount, he retaining the difference; it being also agreed that Watson & Co. should pay all expenses. As the gross receipts are put at not far from a hundred thousand dollars, it would appear that Mr. Graham has done a very good stroke of business. But all the proceeds of the sale do not go to the credit of Watson & Co. It was not to be expected that "James Graham, Esquire," being in charge, would resist the temptation to "work off" a quantity of his own stuff. At least fifty lots in the catalogue—including most of the poor bronze goods—belonged to him; although, owing to the provisions of his contract, they were probably sold to the highest bidder like the rest of the goods. Nor was this all. Nearly twenty consecutive numbers of the catalogue, beginning from 1590, came from another source, being part of the stock of P. Stevens, on which Gillig's American Exchange in London had a lien. These were in the recent Stevens sale at Ortiges & Co.'s rooms, but were "bought in." "The magnificent oil painting"—as the catalogue called it—of Napoleon I. was bid up to \$375. It belonged to the defunct Blossom Club, and was "put in" by Mr. Edward Kearney.

How many more persons "James Graham, Esquire" permitted to "stuff" the sale I cannot tell. It may be interesting for buyers to know that, if dissatisfied with their bargains, they can recover at law the money for any lot they bought under the misapprehension that the goods belonged to the stock of Watson & Co. If the specific misrepresentations of the preposterously silly catalogue should be taken into account, there would be hardly any limit to the grounds for action. For instance, Lot 1123, an "elaborately carved old English oak mantelpiece and over-mantel," described as an old piece, was made by Sherratt, in Chester, and has not a piece of old carving in it, except the centre panel, which is genuine old German; the date, 1679, carved on the panel, however, is fraudulent. The piece is very handsome, and was a bargain at the \$550 it brought—it cost \$1316—but it is not "old." The same may be said of Lot 1144, described as an "elaborately carved old English oak sideboard, owned by Sir Hugh Morgan, dated 1615." It was also made by Sherratt, in Chester, and has not a single piece of old carving in it. If you were to go to Chester about this time, you would probably find at Sherratt's place its duplicate in process of manufacture, and not yet stained or worm-eaten. Not a single piece of all the worthless modern Capo di Monte ware, called "Empire" in the catalogue, belonged to Watson & Co. Lot 1904, a Moorish gold necklace, did not come "from

the Dennison sale," as represented, but from the shop of Mr. Edward Joseph, in London; Lot 1546, an enamelled watch, did not come "from the Hamilton sale;" Lot 1907, a "remarkably fine sunshade handle . . . from the Empress Eugenie's sale," never had any connection with the Empress, but was a trifle, costing about ten dollars. The auctioneer, Justus Cooke, did his work honestly and well, and sold the goods as they were put into his hands.

* * *

AN important art loan exhibition is to be held at the Academy of Design about November next for the benefit of the New York Decorative Art Society. Mr. F. Hopkinson Smith, through whose excellent management, it will be remembered, much of the success of the Bartholdi Pedestal Fund Loan Exhibition was due, will give his services as business director, without charge.

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THE recent death, at Ipswich, of the venerable Mrs. Abingdon, a niece of William Wood, the English miniaturist, was followed by an auction of her effects, which included a number of Wood's miniatures. These brought good prices, but the event of the sale was the lively contest between Mr. Edward Joseph and Mr. Hodgkins, another London dealer, for the possession of a manuscript volume which contained a list of all the miniatures Wood had ever painted, giving the dates and the names of the buyers, and minutely describing the settings of all the pictures and just where the signature and distinguishing marks might be found on each. In many instances sketches of the portraits are given by Wood's own hand to assist in the identification of the originals. The book was finally knocked down to Mr. Joseph for one thousand guineas. One naturally asks why should any one be willing to pay more than \$5000 for a mere personal record kept by a painter little known in his day and virtually unknown in our own? The answer is simple: Wood painted so much like his contemporary, the perhaps too famous Cosway, that numerous portraits by him have unhesitatingly been pronounced by experts—Mr. Joseph among the number—to be the work of "the macaroni miniature painter." Now, Time, the great vindicator, bids him take his proper place under his own name. Mr. Henry O. Watson and his former partner, Mr. Walter Thompson, have each at the present time examples by William Wood, which illustrate in an interesting manner the styles of the two painters. That Cosway so easily distanced Wood during his lifetime was due largely, no doubt, to the encouragement he received from the Prince of Wales, afterward George IV.

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SOME contributors to the art gallery of the so-called "American Exhibition" in London are much dissatisfied with its outcome. Complaints are made that pictures have not been returned to the artists, nor information vouchsafed concerning them. One New York artist, whose picture was reported as sold, is described as unable to obtain any accounting.—Tribune.

Intending contributors were cautioned in these columns to have nothing to do with the affair, which was in no legitimate sense of the term an American enterprise. The speculation was only saved from total failure by the arrival in London of Buffalo Bill's circus, which was annexed to the show. As to the American art gallery it was a disgrace to the country it pretended to represent. The indefatigable Mr. Whitley has already arranged to get up an "Italian Exhibition" on the same plan.

* * *

THE American Art Association announces another "Prize Fund" Exhibition with an award of four medals for the best examples of landscape, figure and marine painting and sculpture, and there is a somewhat indefinite promise as to "prizes" of \$2000 each, which are to be given, as before, for certain pictures to be selected by the anonymous committee of subscribers to the "Fund," and presented to the Metropolitan Museum and other public institutions. If the medals and prizes are not to be distributed with more fairness than heretofore, I don't think that there will be a scramble for such empty honors from a purely business concern, whose assumption of authority in undertaking to confer diplomas is somewhat of an impertinence.

* * *

FRITH, the popular cockney painter, whose pictures, "The Derby Day," "Ramsgate Sands," and "The Railway Station," are well known in England from the engravings of them, has just published his reminiscences. The volume is chiefly interesting for its stories about such famous persons the writer has known, as Turner, Landseer, Dickens, and Thackeray. By intelligent critics Mr. Frith, artistically, is not ranked much above a clever

illustrator; but he probably is not aware of this, for he tells us that for many years he has not "read a word of art criticism." "Nothing is to be learned from it," he says. Royal art critics, it would appear, may be exempted from the consequences of this somewhat sweeping dictum; for Mr. Frith tells with great satisfaction how "the Queen, being herself an artist of experience and ability, more than once assisted me by suggestions," and Prince Albert also gave him advice which he declares proved very valuable. Despite, however, certain little suggestions of toadiness like this the writer makes an entertaining book. Undoubtedly he must have improved greatly since a contribution he sent to Punch, a good many years ago, called forth from the editor, Shirley Brooks, the following reply:

"There is a young artist called Frith,
 His pictures have vigor and pith;
 But his writings have not—
 They're the stupidest rot
 He could trouble an editor with."

* * *

M. HENRI GARNIER, in the "Guide de l'Amateur" for December, falls foul of M. Bouguereau on the subject of some words said to have been addressed by the latter to the painter Gervex on the proposed abolition of prizes and mentions at the Salon. "Suppose that it is decided that there shall be no more recompenses," M. Bouguereau is reported to have said, "how, then, shall the picture-dealers be guided in making their purchases?" M. Garnier thinks, not without reason, that to believe that the dealers wait for the verdict of the Salon jury before buying is to show an unequalled simplicity and a complete ignorance of their recent practice; and he adds that M. Bouguereau appears to be unusually gifted, at least in regard to these two matters of simplicity and ignorance. "I should like to know," he goes on to ask, "when the dealers hurried to the atelier of Corot, of Daubigny, of Diaz or of Troyon, not to mention others, if they were guided by recompenses which these artists had obtained? And at present, who directs them toward Bonvin, Volland and the Ribots? On the other hand, all the medals of honor do not make them, that I know of, besiege the antechambers of the artists officially vouched for, of whom M. Bouguereau is one. Another reason," he thinks, "must be found for the encouragement thus given to painters who do not suffer from lack of patronage.

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NEITHER amateurs nor dealers in French pictures care in the least, when they buy a work, to know if its author has got more or less medals, and it would be easy to prove that the pictures most sought after among the works of contemporary painters are those of men who have received few medals and few honorable mentions. "A few foreign dealers"—for "foreign" read "American"—still give some credit to these ridiculous and useless marks of distinction, but as taste becomes more pure, even these will no longer stand by such puerilities. M. Bouguereau, who has long known the sweets of exportation to America, will, perhaps, before long see the time when his commander's cross and his medals of honor will weigh less with transatlantic amateurs than real talent and true artistic merit.

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THE excellence of the January exhibition at the Union League Club makes one wonder anew if there is really any limit to the fine pictures to be found in private houses in New York. It is from these that most of the numbers of the catalogue forming such a display are drawn. Mr. George I. Seney contributed a fine Daubigny, three out of the four Corots, including a "Dance of the Nymphs," finished as one seldom sees a Corot in this country, where we are educated to go into ecstasies over his mere "rubbings-in" as the most delightful pictures imaginable; a good Diaz; a large and decorative Isabey, "Blessing the Hounds"—a scene outside an old French church—and "Christmas Eve," a brilliant and spirited work by Benliure, crowded with figures all carefully painted, but reminding one too much of Villegas to be considered altogether original. Mr. Mannheimer sent an elaborate and representative Casanova, "Visiting the Convent Wine Vaults;" Toby Rosenthal's "Dancing Lesson of Our Grandmothers," which was seen at Knoedler's for a time; a dull Alma-Tadema—"Tibullus at Delos"—and a good Troyon. The fine Troyon of the collection, however, and probably the finest Troyon of its kind in this country, was the "Landscape and Cattle," lent by Mr. Albert Spencer, who also lent a delightful Corot, with the lightest and fleeciest clouds imaginable, and three works of Diaz—

two of them figure pieces. Mr. H. T. Chapman, Jr., lent a Michel and a Rousseau; Charles Stewart Smith contributed "The Message," by Charlemont—the new Meissonier—a Domingo, and a slovenly-painted study by Munkacsy of the chief Pharisee in his "Christ Before Pilate." Mr. James A. Garland sent "On the Seine," by Daubigny, and there was a fine example of the same master from the collection of Mr. John T. Martin, who also contributed a characteristic Vibert, "The Canon's Dinner"—showing the ecclesiastical gourmet attacking a boiled lobster while a half-starved priest reads to him from a big folio—and (could there be a greater contrast?) a Millet showing a peasant "going to work" with a water-bottle on her shoulder balanced by a cord on her right wrist. There were two other examples by Millet, one "Return from the Farm" (lent by Knoedler), a superb picture of two peasants—a man and a woman—trudging along after their day's work, she with her basket thrown over her head like a bonnet, and he with his hay-fork over his shoulder. The walking action is excellent. The other example of Millet, "The Wool-Carder"—which was in the Morgan sale—was lent by Mrs. Charles Crocker.

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JULES BRETON'S famous "Colza Gatherers," with its exquisite twilight effect, the tender new moon appearing as the blazing sun goes down, was, of course, one of the gems of the collection. It was rather startling to find the owner's name given in the catalogue as James F. Sutton (of the American Art Association), remembering that at the Probasco sale, under the management of Mr. Sutton's American Art Association, the picture, ostensibly, was sold for \$16,600. The fact that Mr. Sutton now owns the "Colza Gatherers" goes far to confirm the story, strenuously denied at the time, that he and his associates really bought Mr. Probasco's paintings *before* the sale took place and protected them when they were put up at auction. American landscape was represented at the Union League Club's exhibition by the work of Inness, Dewey, Murphy and Tryon. Inness's companion pictures, "The Coming Shower," and "Winter" (sunset), show him at his very best. One has to turn to Rousseau's "Le Givre," in the Walters collection, to find anything to compare with the inspiration of the former, and to Constable—Rousseau's early ideal—for such marvellous storm-clouds as confront one in the latter. Mr. Richard H. Halsted, who owns both pictures, is to be congratulated on possessing two of the finest landscapes that have been painted in this generation.

* * *

IT is gratifying to learn that Meissonier has completely recovered from the slight attack of paralysis which, for a time, deprived him of the use of his right thumb. I read in the Paris papers that he has just finished a large water-color, and another picture, the subjects of which are drawn from the wars of the First Empire. Both of these works are to go to English dealers or amateurs. One of them, probably, is the modified replica of the "Friedland," now in our Metropolitan Museum of Art.

* * *

"THE Last Moments of Mozart," by Munkacsy, now on exhibition at the Twenty-third Street Tabernacle, will be considered by the discerning public, I think, far more worthy of his reputation as a painter than the colossal canvas, "Christ on Calvary," in the same building. Not only in composition and in color is it more satisfactory, but, in spite of certain theatrical features, such as forced shadows, evidently introduced for the purpose of giving relief to certain objects and persons, and undue values to certain lights for the purpose of concentration of effect, it is altogether a less perfunctory performance. Munkacsy's wonderful technic was never better shown than in the masterful brush-work of this canvas; the color is rich but subdued; the atmospheric quality in the room where the ill-fated musician is listening to his own requiem is not to be surpassed; but, after this, everything is sacrificed for effect. The forced high light on the pillow brings out strongly the head of the dying man, and all the accessories to the figure are carefully elaborated; but the life-size figures of the musicians are little more than lay models, and the wife and child behind Mozart's chair are slighted by the painter in much the same way as he has slighted the Madonna-like woman and her child in his "Christ Before Pilate."

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THE sculptor, De Saint-Marceaux, has discovered and brought before the Paris police some parties engaged in

counterfeiting terra-cottas of his and of the sculptor Dubois. He found the counterfeits, in tinted plaster, being borne through the streets, to some purchaser apparently, on the shoulders of two employés of a certain dealer, and had the men arrested. Such proceedings are not uncommon in New York, but the aggrieved parties have not been able to bring to justice our perpetrators of similar frauds.

* * *

A NEW terror is suggested for the barber-shop by a writer in *The Sun*. We have "high art and rum," he says; now, why not "high art and lather?" He proposes to turn the ceiling of the barber-shop into an art gallery, at which the victim can gaze ecstatically while under treatment by the tonsorial operator, who no doubt would be properly trained to expiate learnedly on the beauties of the collection. We are told that

"A humble barber in the Bowery has already caught the idea in a crude way, and has set his aristocratic brethren an example by covering his ceiling indiscriminately with attractive figures from theatrical posters and then varnishing over the whole until it has the appearance of an artist's dream after a Welsh rarebit."

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BOUGUEREAU'S quarrel with his agents, Boussod, Valadon & Co.—the nature of which Mr. Theodore Child tells on another page—leaves that painter free to sell directly to any person in this country who wants to buy.

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BENJAMIN CONSTANT'S large and repulsive painting, "The Vengeance of Scheriff," with its pools of blood, and stabbed or decapitated women strewing the floor of the harem, has been imported into this country for the art education of the frequenters of a down-town whiskey saloon in this city. Next to the Morgue, this is undoubtedly the best selection for its permanent abode.

MONTEZUMA.

BOSTON ART NEWS.

THE Art Club's thirty-seventh exhibition is the event of the month, and not altogether so depressing as such events commonly are. It is so much like one of your National Academy of Design exhibitions, that a visitor taken to it blindfolded, might, on opening his eyes, believe himself to be in one of the rooms of the Academy, hung with the season's product of some too well known artists, and of others who should be even more unknown than they are. Taken by-and-large, however, the current Art Club Exhibition has its cheer. There is a minimum of monstrosities of drawing, and of atrocities of color. Both kinds of horrors used to be present in great force. Their diminution is probably the best and surest measure of the progress of art in America; hanging committees have got beyond passing things that were once given good places in exhibitions, and what with the vogue of the Paris work sent home by young Americans, and the abundance of schools, as good as any abroad, there is really less toleration for bad drawing everywhere, and a raising of standards in all respects. Such cheer, and it is substantial, may be got out of the exhibition. But any large exhibition, some connoisseurs hold, is barbarism, and if these be true of collections in which masterpieces abound, what shall be said of collections of mediocrities? If a collection of fancy dogs be a howling torture to the prize specimens themselves, and to the fondest lovers of their species, what agonies would one endure in a collection of curs of low degree? It is no more possible for even good pictures to keep the peace among themselves when crowded cheek by jowl with one another; and no more possible for them to show at their best than it is for the best bred dogs to be happy at a bench-show, or to look as they do at their masters' feet or in their mistresses' boudoirs. The exhibitions of the ideal by and by of art will allow a room, or, at least, a side of a room, to each picture of any importance whatever.

The Art Club has increased its fund for the purchase of pictures out of the exhibition from \$1000 to \$1500, and this sum has been expended largely on paintings by New York exhibitors. The most important purchase was F. W. Freer's female figure—a very solid but rather meaningless piece of painting, depicting a young girl in black evening dress, with the fashionable black transparent fan of the period pressed against her plump and pleasing figure. It is an eminently proper purchase for a gentlemen's club-house—so much, at least, is to be said for the jury's selection. Two other of the six purchases are New York landscapes—one by Charles W. Eaton, of an autumnal red-brown pasture, garnished by

shiny little pools, and the other a sweet little bit of the Merrimac River by George H. Smillie. The excellent likeness of Professor Hubert Herkomer by Benoni Irwin is as good a portrait as there is in the exhibition, and this is not intending to say a great deal; it is dark, dry and literal. So is the portrait of Judge Hoar by Mr. F. H. Tompkins, only more so; but it is on the line while the Herkomer is skied. Mr. Tompkins, though on the jury, was not on the hanging committee. The next in importance are portraits by ladies: Miss Whitwell's strong portrait of herself (with its Salon number on the frame) and her portrait of a lady, showing feeling for character and delicacy and originality in treatment. Miss Cowdery's portraits of ladies, and Miss Dargin's portrait of the artist Sandham, which is as much too gay, bright and sharp in treatment as Irwin's and Tompkins's portraits are too saturnine.

The interest and the charm of the exhibition for me were found in the little things rather than the big, and these I found to be by painters unknown to me, and unknown also to my companion at the private view, and his calling requires him to become acquainted with all local artists. It must be that these pleasant bits—which it would take too much space properly to describe, and the painters' names to which would convey no more idea to the reader than they did to me—must be more of the first-fruits of the brave new birth of art in the New World, the pupils, perhaps, with Paris finishing-off, of our new art schools and leagues and museums. It is time almost for a second generation from the artists who partook of the revival of art which sprung from the enthusiasm over the modern French school of landscapists, and which blossomed suddenly in art talk, art study and art energy and industry, and household decoration of all sorts under the glorious sun of the Centennial Exhibition. Evidently the children of Americans whose repressed, or dormant, or half-shamefacedly cultivated art impulse and faculty were stirred too late by that influence, have been taken in hand and trained in the proper methods and led on with the right kind of encouragement. Speaking of young people, the daughter of Mr. Foxcroft Cole, the landscapist, still in her teens, has produced a number of portraits that show remarkable promise. She has been a pupil of Carolus-Duran, and can dash off in a few hours, with full and sweeping brush, that kind of portrait which across the room seems painfully finished in every minute detail, but near to is seen to be an apparently incoherent mass of meaningless wild strokes, dabs and dashes, seemingly "something Japanese" if anything at all. The two or three portraits that Miss Cole has thus far achieved make all who have seen them eager for her next and sanguine for her future. Mr. Sargent, Duran's most distinguished American pupil, is still the art lion of the hour among us, being kept busy on Bostonians of fashion after the Bostonian way of running to one painter for a season. A fascinating head or two entitles young Mr. Templeton Coolidge to mention as another most brilliant and promising representative of the younger generation among us in portraiture.

Eager expectation and curiosity receive no gratification whatever as yet concerning the architect's design for the new Public Library in Copley Square. The work has been committed by the trustees to McKim & Meade, of your city, much to the disgust of Boston architects, who, however, are duly thankful that the great opportunity was not wasted by the city government as was at one time threatened by turning the job over to the city architect. This functionary is excellent at engine-houses and school buildings, and, before the Architects' League finally got him securely headed off, had completed a design for the important structure which is to form a third side of the splendid triangle on two other sides of which stand Trinity Church and the Museum of Fine Arts. The newspaper which represents the City Hall people has published this city architect's design, with its complete assortment of gables, colonnades and Vauban towers, and, by way of contrast, an alleged design by Mr. McKim of a rectangular severity of simplicity calculated to make people who are fond of the handsome public buildings of the past sorry that the city architect was prevented from executing his proposed monument. There is no authority whatever for supposing this to be the design that the trustees have accepted, but it would not be unlikely, for McKim & Meade's new mansions on Commonwealth Avenue differ as much from the prevailing Richardsonian American architecture as the chaste but elegant colonial mansion does from the new Queen Anne cottage of Bar Harbor.

GRETA.